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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3174
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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: OSCE HOLDS SEMINAR ON TURKMEN HUMAN RIGHTS
ORGANS

11. (U) Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Internet distribution

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: At a July 16 seminar for government officials devoted to the subject of improving the work of Turkmen human rights institutions, an OSCE expert from Sweden explained the international legal framework regulating governmental human rights organs and the role of human rights commissions in dealing with individual complaints. International experts from Ireland, Estonia, Azerbaijan and the Netherlands delivered presentations on the roles of their national commissions on human rights in dealing with individual complaints. According to a Turkmen government official, Turkmenistan has approached some international organizations for advice on establishing an independent human rights institute. The seminar, which was part of a series of Turkmenistan-OSCE joint projects for 2009, was held in the framework of legal reform in Turkmenistan. END SUMMARY.

TURKMENISTAN-OSCE JOINT PROJECT

13. (SBU) The director of the State Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (IDHR), Shirin Ahmedova opened the session, saying that the seminar being was held in the framework of legal reform with the aim of further democratization of Turkmen society and improvement of its national legislation. In this regard, Ahmedova underscored that Turkmenistan pays significant importance to learning from the experiences of other members of the international community and strengthening contacts with foreign partners such as the United Nations and OSCE. Yesterday's seminar was one such event organized by OSCE together with the Turkmen government in the framework of their joint projects in 2009.

EXPERT PRESENTATIONS

14. (SBU) Frank Orton, former Ombudsman in Sweden and Bosnia and Herzegovina, delivered a presentation on the international legal framework regulating the national human rights institutes, Paris Principles. He also made a presentation on the role of Human Rights Commissions in dealing with individual complaints, discussing best practices and concrete examples from different countries. Shemshat Atajanova, Head of the Department of Human Rights Issues and the Protection of Democracy of IDHR, in her presentation talked about current mechanisms of dealing with individual complaints. Sinead

Lucey, Senior Enquiries and Legal Officer of the Irish Human Rights Commission delivered a presentation on the work of that office, and talked about its mandate and work in dealing with individual human rights complaints. Indrek Teder, Chancellor of Justice from Estonia, spoke about the mandate and work of his office. Mehman Amiraliyev, Head of the Department of Protection of Human Rights of the Office of Ombudsman on Human Rights from Azerbaijan, spoke about the mandate and work of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Adriana Stehouwer, Deputy Ombudsman of the Netherlands, made a presentation on the mandate and work of the Ombudsman in the Netherlands in dealing with the human rights complaints referred to her office. Listening to the presentations, Ahmedova said that "Turkmenistan is keen to learn international best practices of dealing with individual complaints." The presentations were followed by a Q&A session.

TURKMENISTAN AND AN INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE

15. (SBU) In the course of the seminar, Ahmedova mentioned that as a result of Turkmenistan's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) reports to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in December 2008 and March 2009, the UPR made recommendations to Turkmenistan with regard to its human rights records. In particular, one of the recommendations was that Turkmenistan establish an independent human rights body. Pursuing the recommendation, IDHR approached international organizations such as UN and OSCE to prepare proposals on the institutional character and system of such a body. She said that the new agency/institute would monitor human rights issues in the country, put forward proposals, and provide recommendations on human rights issues, and be a protector and guarantor of the Constitution.

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16. (SBU) The event gathered representatives from IDHR, the Institute for State and Law under the President of Turkmenistan, the Mejlis (Parliament) of Turkmenistan, Ministries of Justice, Internal Affairs, National Security, General Prosecutor's Office, Judges, Bar Association, Women's Union, Youth Organization, Ashgabat municipality, local media, UN Representation in Turkmenistan, the U.S. Embassy, and the OSCE Center in Ashgabat.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: Certainly, the creation of an independent human rights body in Turkmenistan would be a major improvement. How effective that body would be would depend on the degree of independence as well as whether its recommendations or proposals are taken seriously by the government. END COMMENT.

MILES